

Message Text

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FM AMCONSUL QUEBEC

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 757

INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY

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C O N F I D E N T I A L QUEBEC 0288

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CA

SUBJECT: ELECTION CHIT-CHAT WITH DALE THOMSON

1. MCGILL UNIVERSITY VICE CHANCELLOR AND LIBERAL PARTY INSIDER, DALE THOMSON, CONFIRMED TO ME OVER WEEKEND THAT BOURASSA WAS CAUGHT UNAWARES BY DEPTH OF ANGLO AND ETHNIC ANTAGONISM TOWARDS HIS PARTY. AS RESULT, LIBERAL ORGANIZATION IS IN SAME DISARRAY IN SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF GREATER MONTREAL RIDINGS WHERE NON-FRANCOPHONES FORM LARGE PORTION OF VOTERS. BOURASSA AND LIEUTENANTS ARE NOW SCURRYING ABOUT IN SEARCH OF ATTRACTIVE ANGLO AND ETHNIC CANDIDATES WILLING TO ACCEPT CANDIDACY AT LAST MOMENT. THOMSON SAID HE HAD HIMSELF BEEN ASKED TO RUN IN WEST-END RIDING BUT HAD REFUSED. "LIKE MANY OTHERS", THOMSON SAID, HE WOULD HAVE ACCEPTED CANDIDACY HAD BOURASSA HIMSELF ASKED HIM TO DO SO PRIOR TO ELECTION ANNOUNCEMENT. ONE OF BOURASSA'S GREATEST WEAKNESSES IS HIS PRACTICE OF WORKING THROUGH SHADOWY SECONDARY FIGURES WHOSE AUTHORITY IS UNCERTAIN.

2. UNION NATIONALE, ACCORDING THOMSON, IS BENEFICIARY OF SUBSTANTIAL PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE (PC) SUPPORT IN MONTREAL ANGLOPHONE RIDINGS. THEY HAVE RECRUITED TORIES TO RUN IN SAME CONSTITUENCIES AS UN CANDIDATES AND HAVE AGREED SUPPORT OTHER CANDIDATES BIRON HAS BEEN ABLE FIND HIMSELF. MOREOVER, THEY ARE

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COLLECTING MONEY TO BOLSTER UN BADLY DEPLETED FINANCES. THOMSON

ESTIMATED UN MAY GAIN UP TO 20 PERCENT OF POPULAR VOTE" BUT
WAS RELUCTANT PREDICT HOW MANY SEATS THEY MIGHT CARRY.

3. IN CONTRAST, HE DOUBTED DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE WOULD CARRY ANY
SEATS DUE THEIR LATE START. HOWEVER, HE HOPES PARTY IN FUTURE
MIGHT FORM NUCLEUS OF A "BADLY NEEDED" SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY
IN PROVINCE. UNEASY COALITION OF DESPARATE NATIONALIST
FORCES WHICH FORM PARTE QUEBEIS IS LIKELY FLY APART EVENTUALLY
AND ITS PROGRESSIVE WING COULD BE ANOTHER ELEMENT IN SUCH A
LEFT OF CENTER FORMATION.

4. COMMENTING ON ANDRE RAYNAULD, FORMER PRESIDENT OF ECONOMIC
COUNCIL OF CANADA AND RECENTLY NAMED LIBERAL CANDIDATE IN
OUTREMONT RIDING, THOMSON CHARACTERIZED RAYNAULD AS EXTREMELY ABLE,
FORCEFUL, OUTSPOKEN AND AMBITIOUS. WHILE IN OTTAWA, HE WAS ONE
OF RARE SENIOR OFFICIALS WHO WAS NOT INTIMIDATED BY TRUDEAU
AND WHO ACTED WITH COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE IN HIS DEALINGS WITH PM.
BOURASSA IS LIKELY HAVE DIFFICULTY IN CONTROLLING RENOULD WHO
WILL INSIST ON EQUALITY WITHIN CABINET AND FOR INDEPENDENCE IN
RUNNING HIS OWN MINISTRY. INITIALLY, THOMSON THOUGHT RAYNAULD MIGHT
TAKE OVER PORTFOLIO OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY FROM GUY ST. PIERRE
WHOSE RELATIONS WITH BOURASSA ARE STRAINED AT PRESENT.
EVENTUALLY, RAYNAULD WILL HAVE TO BE GIVEN FINANCE MINISTRY WHEN
GRACEFUL MOVEMENT TO OTTAWA OR TO ANOTHER SENIOR POST IN QUEBEC
CAN BE ARRANGED FOR THE ABLE, AMBITIOUS AND POLITICALLY POTENT
ENCUMBENT , RAYMOND GARNEAU.
MCNAMARA

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